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Approved For Release 2005/03/24 : CIA-RDP91T01172R000200280028-1

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
18 September 1952

Comment on Lebanese Crisis

The resignation on 18 September of President el-Khourî of Lebanon and the appointment of General Chehab, Commander in Chief of the Army, as temporary Chief of State and Prime Minister have eased the political tension in Beirut. Corruption at the top levels of the government was the basic cause of the recurrent crises in Lebanon during the past three months, and Khourî was the main target of opposition elements.

For the present Chehab, like Nagib in Egypt, appears to hold the key to Lebanon's political future. He is believed to have most of the army behind him and he also has substantial support from opposition political leaders. Early reports from Beirut have emphasized that the coup is political and not military.

The new Chief of State, who is a Christian, is faced with the problem of easing the Moslem-Christian tension built up over the past weeks. He must also deal with Lebanese political leaders who are on record as strongly opposed to any military direction of civil matters. Moreover, Chehab's past friendship with Khourî lends itself to exploitation by possible military and civilian opponents. Chehab, or any succeeding government leader, will also have to cope with the basic economic problems and the widespread corruption which caused Khourî's fall.

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